

MODEL FOR SESSION GUIDELINES
TO CREATE A POLICY FOR
REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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- G. Parental Permission and Medical Consent Form
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Prepared by the
Church and Community Committee of
Shenango Presbytery

PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

PURPOSE

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this child sexual abuse prevention policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children.

As a Christian community of faith at , we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that protect the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children as well as all of those who work with children.

We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will educate all those who work with children regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods. We will have a clearly defined procedure that conforms to the requirements of state law for reporting a suspected incident of child abuse. We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident is alleged.

DEFINITIONS

Recognizing that there are other forms of child abuse, for the purposes of this policy "**abuse**" is used to mean child d sexual abuse or exploitation.

"**Adult**" is a person 18 years of age and older.

"**Child**" is a person 17 years of age and younger.

"**Mandated reporter**" is anyone who, as a part of his or her ministry in the church, has contact with children.

"Designated reporter" is usually the head of staff who is responsible to document any allegation and report it to the appropriate authority.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE WHEN DEALING WITH CHILDREN

According to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, " Sexual Abuse or Exploitation" is

"The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depiction or forming, of any sexually explicit conduct or the rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault, or other form of sexual exploitation of children." 23 Pa.C.S.A. PP 6303

"Abuse " may be violent or non-violent. All abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

"Abuse" is *criminal behavior* that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

"Abuse" includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

POLICIES

SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR WORKER SELECTION

The first procedure, called a "screening procedure" provides the church with the best potential to reduce legal risk. **Primary Screening** is required for all paid church employees and all church workers in direct contact with children and youth. **Secondary Screening** is recommended for all occasional volunteers who do not work directly with children or youth.

Secondary Screening procedures include the following components:

- Review of the adopted guidelines for the prevention of risk of sexual abuse
- Signature of the Participation Covenant (See Appendix Form E)
- In-depth discussion of reporting procedures
- Encouragement to attend training session

In addition to secondary procedures, primary procedures include the following components:

- An employment application and screening form (Appendix Forms A and B)
- A personal interview for the purpose of screening workers to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse
- Completion and submission of an Act 33 child abuse clearance authorization form (Appendix Form C)
- Completion and submission of an Act 34 criminal record check authorization form (Appendix Form D)
- Stipulation that all workers in direct contact with children and youth must be affiliated with the congregation for at least six months

Each of these is to be completed before the person begins work at the church.

A copy of these forms is in the Appendix following this document.

Completed forms are locked in a confidential file cabinet. The Christian Education Committee alone has access to this file cabinet, on a need-to-know basis.

Interviews of prospective workers are conducted by two members of the session or appropriate committee.

and an Act 34 criminal record check. The church pays the costs. Clearances are effective throughout continuous church membership and continuous residence in the local community.

All primary screened employees must participate annually in a training session, within one month of hire. Secondary screened volunteers will be encouraged to attend training sessions. It is strongly recommended that all elected church officers participate in an annual training session.

TRAINING WORKERS

Paid and volunteer workers are required to participate in training at the beginning of their service and at least annually thereafter. Proper training enables workers to understand how procedures are done honestly and discreetly to protect themselves and the children and adults of the church. This training includes the following:

- The church's policies for the prevention of abuse
- Procedures to be used in all ministries with children
- Steps to report a suspicion or incident of abuse
- State laws regarding abuse

Annual training also includes the mandatory reporting law including:

- What constitutes abuse
- Who are "mandatory reporters"
- The length of time required to make a report (48 hours)
- The nature and content of the report
- The agencies to be contacted
- The criminal penalties for failure to report
- Protection from litigation if reporting is in good faith
- The name of the "designated reporter"

PARTICIPATION COVENANT

All workers in ministries with children are asked to sign a written covenant of participation, agreeing to the principles of this policy. This covenant is useful in establishing behavior standards and is an important reminder of our high regard

WORKER SUPERVISION

TWO ADULTS

In order to provide a safe, loving atmosphere where learning can take place, there will normally be a minimum of 2 adults in any room, program, event or activity involving children and youth. Exceptions should be authorized in advance. (See Form F.)

WRITTEN PARENTAL PERMISSION

At least one parent or guardian must give written permission, including emergency medical treatment, prior to their child's participation in any event or activity away from the church. Advance notice is given regarding events in which children will be participating. Church workers must obtain written parental permission before going anywhere alone with a child, or spending time with him/her in an unsupervised situation. (See Form G.)

OPEN DOORS

Classroom doors with an unobstructed window are preferred. These windows are to be uncovered at all times. If there is no window, the door is to remain open throughout the activity or class. During any counseling sessions, the door is to remain open. Sunday School Superintendents or other church workers or members may make random visits to all classrooms or other areas where there are children.

SUPERVISION AND TRANSPORTATION

Worker supervision begins at the time the first child arrives and continues until the last child has left. Parents or guardians are responsible for each child's transportation to and from the activity or event. Exceptions to this supervision are by written permission of a parent or guardian.

CHURCH NURSERY IDENTIFICATION

The parent or guardian may authorize other adults to bring or pick up a child. Children are received and dismissed only to authorized persons. The two adult rule must be followed. One of the supervisors in the church nursery must be at least 21 years of age.

REPORTING

LINE OF REPORTING

Suspected cases of abuse are reported immediately to the church staff person related to the event or activity, who immediately reports to the pastor and/or the designated reporter, who is responsible to comply with the reporting requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Once an incident is reported to the designated reporter, the individual who initiated the report has fulfilled his/her legal responsibility. Further investigation and comment by the mandated reporter is not appropriate. The designated reporter is trained and will follow proper procedures.

Mandated reporters who report in good faith have immunity from civil and criminal liability. Even if a report is investigated and determined to be unsubstantiated, social services professionals are immune from civil and criminal liability when acting in good faith.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

When an allegation of abuse during a church activity is made, the following steps and procedures will be followed by the designated reporter:

- If necessary, the child's emotional, physical safety, and support are assured.
- The child's parents are notified.
- The alleged abuser is discreetly removed from further involvement with children during the investigative process.
- When the designated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experiences, that child abuse has occurred the proper agencies shall be notified.

*Childline 1-800-932-0313

*Local Children and Youth Services

Lawrence County 724 658 2555

Mercer County 724 662 2703

*Executive Presbyter 724 5281610

- During the investigation a written record is kept of the steps taken by the church in response. Include the following:
 - * Date and time of reporting
 - *Name, age, and address of victim followed by the date of the alleged incident
 - *Name, age, and address of alleged abuser and his/her relationship to the child
 - *Details that were reported (See appendix Form H.)

The responsibility of the mandated reporter is not to investigate the incident - just to report. All information is confidential. Telephone reports are made from written, signed, and dated documentation, in the presence of a church-paid or volunteer worker who has been trained.

RESPONDING TO AN ESTABLISHED ALLEGATION

If an allegation is established, the following steps will be taken:

- The church's attorney and liability insurance company are notified.
- Full cooperation is given to law enforcement officials and child

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RESPONDING TO AN ESTABLISHED ALLEGATION

If a report is made, the following steps will be taken:

- The church's attorney and liability insurance company are notified.
- Full cooperation is given to law enforcement officials and child protective services.
- A designated spokesperson makes all statements and responses to the news

VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Name:

Last

First

Middle

Present Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Daytime phones:

Evening phones:

Email address

Occupation:

Employer:

Current job responsibilities and schedule:

Previous Work Experience: Please list your previous employers from the past five years.

Include the job title, a description of duties and responsibilities, the name of the company/employer, the address of company/employer, and the dates you were employed in each position.

Previous Volunteer Experience: Please list any relevant volunteer positions you have held and list the duties you performed, the address and -phone number of the volunteer organization, and the dates of Your volunteer service.

Highest academic level achieved or degree earned:

Special interests, hobbies, and skills:

How many hours per week are you available to volunteer?

Days Evenings Weekends

Can you make a one-year commitment to this volunteer role?

Do you have your own transportation? Valid Driver's License?

Driver's License #:

Frst Aid Training? Date completed:

CPR Training? Date Completed:

Do you have auto liability insurance? (List name of carrier):

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth?

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, or theft)? No Yes

If yes, please explain fully:

Have you ever been a victim of an incident of child abuse or neglect? No Yes

If yes, please comment.

Would you be available for periodic volunteer training sessions? Yes **No**

References: Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide complete address and phone information for each. References are confidential.

Name:

Address:

Daytime Phone:

Evening Phone:

How do you know this person?

Name: _____

Address:

Daytime Phone:

Evening Phone:

How do you know this person?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone:

Evening Phone: _____

How do you know this person? _____

Waiver and Consent:

I, , hereby certify that the information I have provided on this application for employment is true and correct. I authorize this church to verify the information I have provided on this application by contacting the references and employers I have listed, by conducting a criminal records check, or by other means, including contacting others whom I have not listed. I authorize the references and employers listed in this application to give you whatever information they may have regarding my character and fitness for the job for which I have applied.

I agree to abide by and be bound by the policies of _____ and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties on behalf of _____

I have read this waiver and the entire application, and I am fully aware of its contents. I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion, and understand any information gathered will remain confidential.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Witness

Date

REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH
FORM FOR REFERENCE CHECK

Applicant name:

Reference name:

Reference address:

Reference phone:

What is your relationship to the applicant?

How long have you known the applicant?

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's abilities to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime?

If so, please describe.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?__.

**REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH
PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT**

The congregation of _____ Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and workers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter, and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

No adult who has been convicted of child abuse should volunteer to work with children or youth in an church-sponsored activity. All workers in ministries with children or youth must be members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. All workers in ministries with children or youth shall observe the "Two Adult Rule" so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth. Workers in ministries with children or youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse. Workers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a worker in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? Yes _No
2. As a worker in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two Adult Rule" at all times unless given prior authorization for exemption? Yes No
3. As a worker in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?
_Yes _No
4. As a worker in this congregation, do you agree to report promptly abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? Yes No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform the minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? Yes No

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Worker

Date

Exemption of the Two Adult Rule

Form F

We understand that a very effective strategy to protect children and youth in our church from child sexual abuse is to have at least two adults present in the company of children. We also understand that this strategy is not always practical. Therefore the signature on this form by an authorized person takes note of the fact that in a limited circumstance another adult in the congregation may engage in a specific activity involving a child or children, and be exempt from the two adult rule.

Date for the exemption to be in effect (not more than one year)

Activity in which the exemption is allowed

Other details of the exemption

Authorized signature

Signature of the adult being exempted

Exemption of the Two Adult Rule

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Activity in which the exemption is allowed

Other details of the exemption

Authorized signature

Signature of the adult being exempted

Parent (Guardian) Consent Authorization

Forth G

My signature, along with the detailing of certain conditions and **restrictions, authorizes** selected adults in the church to take reasonable responsibility for the **supervision and the temporary** medical care of my child.

Name of the child or youth

Authorization period (not more than one year)

Activity (ies) covered by the authorization

Activity (ies) NOT covered by the authorization

Other conditions to be honored or exempted

Allergies, medical conditions, and other guidance about my child that care-givers ought to know

May-an adult be exempted from the Two Adult Rule?

Yes

No

(If an exemption is allowed, detail any restrictions)

Signature of parent or guardian

REPORT OF SUSPECTED SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

REPORTED BY:

Name and Title

Address

Telephone

PERSON SUSPECTED OF
MISCONDUCT:

Name

Address

Telephone

Ministry Position

OTHER PERSONS INVOLVED (Witnesses or Victims)

Name

Address

Telephone

Describe the incident(s) of suspected sexual misconduct, including date(s), time(s), and location(s):

Other information which may be helpful to the investigation: